

Accessibility & Gmail

Overview

This lesson discusses accessibility within Gmail.

Core Concepts

Gmail Limitations

Unfortunately, Gmail does not have as many authoring tools that help with accessibility. In Gmail you are unable to apply headings, add alt text, and add tables.

You can try adding alt text in an Office application, but when the image is added to the message, the alt text resets to the image file name or “Displaying image.png”.

Getting Around Gmail's Limitations

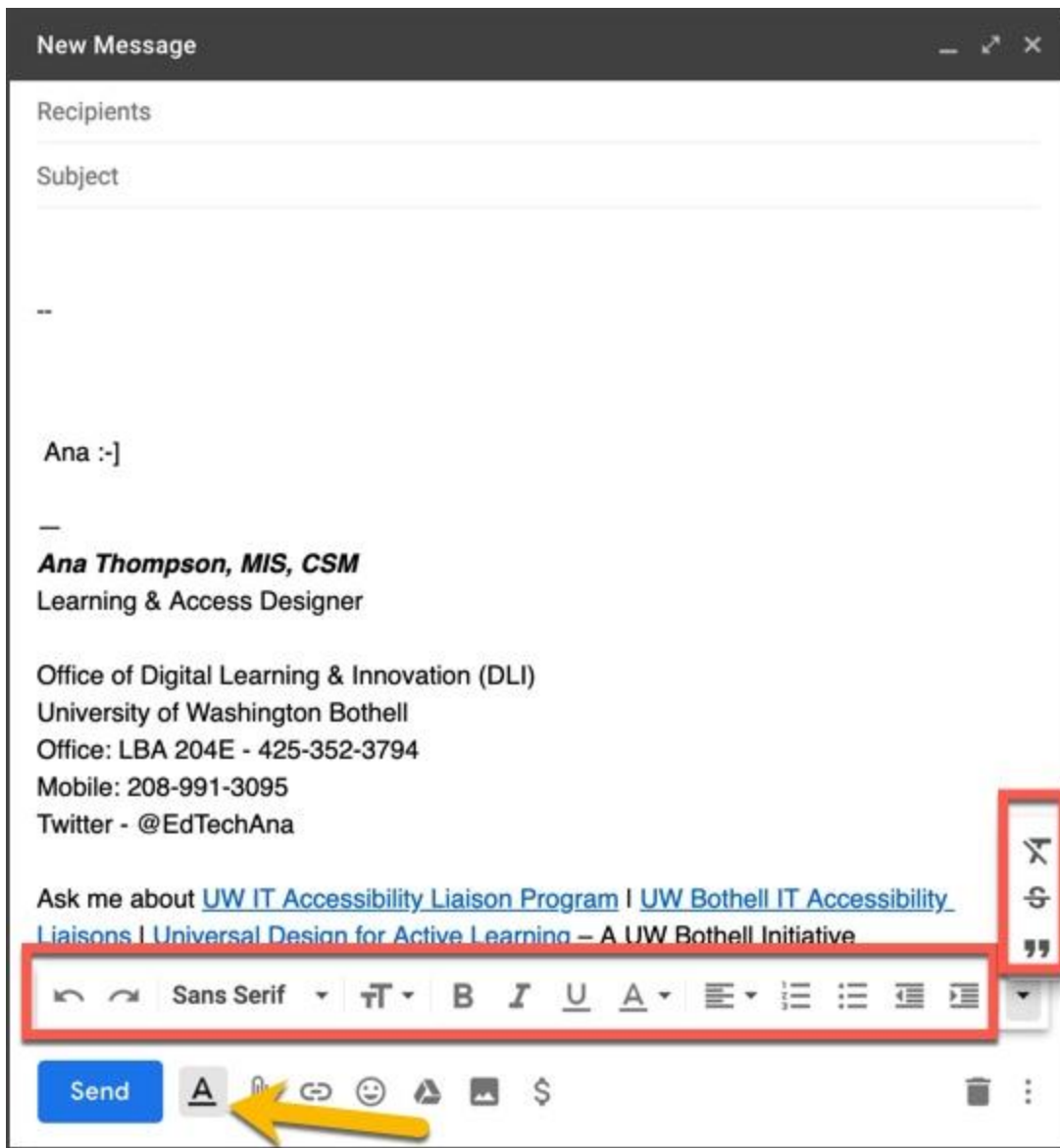
Until Gmail adds more accessibility authoring tools, the best approach to sending accessible emails that include images or text-heavy emails that are broken into sections would be to attach an accessible Word document or PDF to your email with the main message pointing users to the attachment.

If you are intent on distributing an image based email, make sure the first text in your email lets users know that an accessible version is attached (if you make that note at the end, users are first met with inaccessible content and likely to ignore the rest of the message -- it's like stairs leading up to a ramp).



Accessibility Tools Available

When composing an email in Gmail, there are various formatting tools that run along the bottom of the message. To see these tools, you will need to select the Formatting options, an icon with an underlined capital A letter. Once open, you can format the text, add lists, and insert descriptive hyperlinks. There are also some hidden options behind the drop-down arrow at the end (far right) of the Formatting options, namely, Remove Formatting, Strikethrough, and Quote.



Lists

To add a list of items, simply click the numbered or bulleted list icon. The first number/bullet will appear and you can begin typing your list.

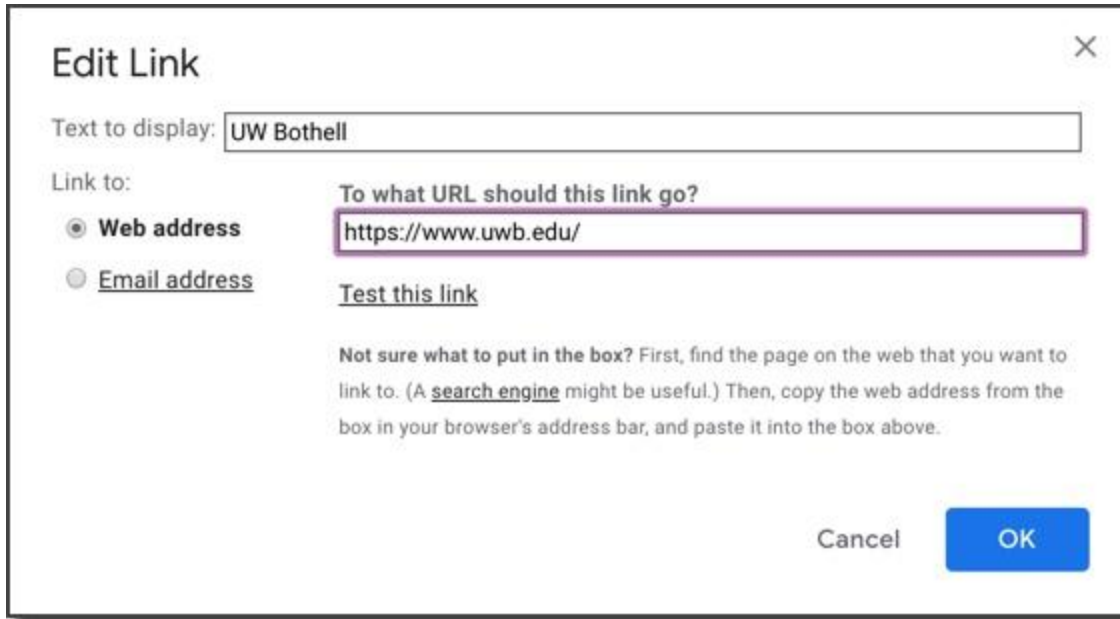


Descriptive Hyperlinks

To add a descriptive hyperlink, click the link icon (it's the one between the paperclip and smiley face below the Formatting tools).

Type your descriptive text into the box labeled "Text to display".

Paste the URL into the web address box.



The screenshot shows the 'Edit Link' dialog box. At the top, the title 'Edit Link' is on the left and a close button 'X' is on the right. Below the title, there is a text input field labeled 'Text to display:' containing the text 'UW Bothell'. Underneath this, the 'Link to:' section has two radio buttons: 'Web address' (which is selected) and 'Email address'. To the right of the 'Web address' radio button is a text input field labeled 'To what URL should this link go?' containing the URL 'https://www.uwb.edu/'. Below the URL field is a link labeled 'Test this link'. At the bottom of the dialog, there are two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'OK'.

